



From top: a Donegal beach, a 10 shilling note, Young Farmers by August Sander, Liquorice Allsorts, pink champagne and Jane Austen



Above: a pack of wolves. Left: Frances McDormand in Fargo



The prized possession you value above all others... A print of the 1914 photo Young Farmers by German August Sander. I love the image of three hard-working young men dressed up for a night out. There's a sense of expectancy for what the night might bring.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... That I was such a grumpy cow in my 40s! I was juggling so many things I think I lost my sense of humour. I'm 57 now and feel full of laughter.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'd wake up in a chalet with a view of Mont Blanc and have pancakes and hot fruit salad. Then I'd take a magic carpet ride with my boyfriend Tim to an Indian Ocean island. We'd go sailing with my daughters – Phoebe, 24, and Brid, 22 – and friends and loved ones. Lunch would be at The Wolseley in Piccadilly – I'd have pink champagne and chicken with tarragon – and I'd spend the afternoon shopping in Paris. I'd have a mint tea beside the Bosphorus in Istanbul, a Turkish massage, then go horse riding with the girls on the beaches of Donegal with my whippets, Dashiell and Flora, running behind us. I'd end the day at home in west London with a glass of Benromach whisky.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Eating sweets, especially Liquorice Allsorts and Jelly Babies.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Road by Cormac McCarthy. It's a grim book about the end of the world yet so calmly written.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd sit among a pack of wolves in the Canadian wilderness. They're fascinating and mysterious creatures.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Listening to people chew, particularly popcorn eaters in the cinema.

The film you can watch time and time again... Fargo is wonderfully dark yet funny, and Frances McDormand is one of my favourite actresses.

The person who has influenced you most... Irish writer and director Brian Friel. I grew up reading his plays and seeing them in Derry at the height of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. It inspired me to choose acting as a career.



Amanda with Dashiell, one of her whippets

'I really regret being such a grumpy cow in my 40s. I was juggling so many things I lost my sense of humour'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's actress Amanda Burton's turn

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Jane Austen, because she was such an amazing woman and writer.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Be a good listener.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... The sky at night. When I was growing up I always used to be looking at it through my grandfather's telescope, so I know it pretty well.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A box of birds' eggs my father gave me when I was eight. He'd collected them as a boy. A few hours after I got the box I balanced it on a banister, but it fell off and every egg shattered. I was heartbroken.

The unending quest that drives you on... To love and to be loved.

The poem that touches your soul... Digging by Seamus Heaney.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm a cold, serious person like many of the characters I've played. I'm actually a complete clown and quite a good laugh.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... My divorce eight years ago [from photographer Sven Arnstein, following his affair]. We had been together for 20 years and my life fell apart. But I found myself in a way I really hold onto now.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd spring criminals from death row and offer them life jail sentences instead.

The song that means most to you... Danny Boy. It always gets to my heart and makes me cry. Also, Phoebe played it on the violin at my dad's funeral.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... My parents giving me a 10 shilling note on my tenth birthday. We went to a high street full of little gift shops. I bought trinkets and was even allowed a Babycham in the pub.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my parents – my mum 12 years ago, aged 76, and Dad two years later aged 89. They had such a strong presence in my life.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To live self-sufficiently on a farm. It's in the pipeline.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Keep your spirit light and go with the flow.

The order of service at your funeral... I expect my daughters will throw a great party. Maybe Phoebe can play Danny Boy on the violin, while Brid sings.

The way you want to be remembered... As a good mum.

The Plug... The final episode of Amanda Burton's Killer Forensics is repeated on Monday at 9pm on Investigation Discovery (Sky 522 and Virgin 214). ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Idris Elba and Naomie Harris star in Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom from Friday. Hilary Mantel's Wolf Hall and Bring Up The Bodies come to life at Stratford RSC. And it's the last week to catch children's opera How The Whale Became at the Royal Opera House



NEXT WEEK

- Behind the scenes on the new series of The Bletchley Circle
- Jamie Oliver's fruity dishes
- Monty Don's tips to help your garden survive the cold
- Britain's best TV listings